In the shade of Locarno?

Why European defence is failing

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Europe's security architects should never have been given planning permission. The security framework of Europe today is not so much architecture as a decaying arcade of stately structures of varying designs reflective of a bygone era, somehow removed from the world around them. In their dotage they compete for the passing attention of a clientele they would have disdained in a more genteel time; seemingly out of place in the new security environment of a post-modern age, they serve only to highlight the confused nostalgia afflicting the European strategic mind. While some in Europe continue to view security as founded upon the enduring pursuit of state interests, others of a more idealistic bent espouse the championing and expansion of European 'values' like some latter-day 'shining city on the hill'. Others seem unsure whether Europe should be involved in security at all, preferring instead to hide behind the legalistic and political pretence of an anachronistic neutrality. While Europe does 'do' security differently to America, some Europeans do not 'do' security at all, underpinning their case with a well-meaning but misplaced pacifism that could be as dangerous in the years to come as that of the architects of a previous age.

Thus European defence sits trapped between engaged and disengaged concepts of security, reflecting a profound strategic confusion within Europe over the objectives and methods of its security and defence: on the one hand, a minimalist, defensive commitment to the protection of the European citizen; on the other, a more aggressive pursuit of security through pre-emption. At a time when Europe urgently needs a new strategic concept to guide its leaders in a complex environment, a glance at European history and the many fractured and contending views of the relationship between power and security demonstrates the difficulties associated with such an endeavour. Unfortunately, for such a concept to work it would need to be based on a consensus over threat and Europe's security intentions, and to be supported by the military means with which to fulfil it. In today's Europe that is nigh impossible. Consequently, European defence is failing.

The strategic schizophrenia that is undermining European defence and is such a prominent feature of contemporary European security and defence policies is nothing new. Indeed, there are interesting similarities with another less than

heroic age: the post-Versailles Europe of the 1920s, in which the collective security mission of the League of Nations, founded upon a profoundly idealistic interpretation of international order, sat uncomfortably alongside more traditional European concepts of power and its balance. The resulting confusion of strategic concepts reached its nadir in the Treaty of Locarno of 1925. This document had its genesis in an attempt by France to involve Britain in a traditional anti-German regime for the protection of its borders, similar to the Entente Cordiale of 1904. However, the treaty was transformed, mainly through the work of the then British Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain, into a framework for the protection and guaranteeing of all borders, including Germany's, to meet the dictates of the League, which forbade traditional alliances—these being held primarily responsible, along with the balance of power, arms races and secret covenants, for the outbreak of the First World War. Like European defence today, Locarno was a strange fusion of realist and idealist thought that tried to defend both the concept of collective security and values that were at variance with the interests of some of the signatories. Not surprisingly, without any recourse to effective sanctions Locarno ended up defending neither. France (and Belgium) did not gain the alliance with the British they sought, while German grievances over the Versailles settlement and the borders that had been imposed upon it only grew. The treaty also demonstrated to Germany that the Versailles peace was revisable and that in the long run British and French policies were untenable. Then as now, there was an 'emperor's new clothes' quality to the transnational European strategic concept.

The Europe of 2002 similarly labours under a hybrid transnational strategic concept, as it too endeavours to fuse both realism and idealism, albeit in a very different strategic environment. Moreover, as 11 September all too tragically demonstrated, this is a strategic environment in which threats exist that can rapidly become grave. Once again, the obsessive preoccupation of west Europeans with the nature of the mechanism they are creating rather than the environment in which it resides could, like its forebear, render Europe incapable of dealing with those threats when they become truly menacing.

Thus the Europe of the 1920s and that of the first decade of the new century share profound uncertainty over the means and ends of security; and it is this uncertainty, and the contention it breeds, that render the development of a European transnational strategic concept almost impossible. Consequently, European security and defence is somehow less than the sum of its parts. What Europe is defending, against whom, where, why and how seem to be intangibles, much as they were in the 1920s when the Wilsonian assumption that the power of world opinion would restrain revisionism was at its peak.[1] And yet, for any actor or

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[1] Woodrow Wilson described how collective security was intended to work in September 1918. 'National purposes have fallen more and more into the background and the common purpose of enlightened mankind has taken their place. The counsels of plain men have become on all hands more simple and straightforward and more unified than the counsels of sophisticated men of affairs, who still retain the impression that they are playing a game of power and playing for high stakes.' See Arthur S. Link, ed., *The papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), vol. 51, pp. 131–2.

group of actors, the answers to such questions provide the very foundations of effective security and defence. This is particularly so for the EU and its member states; for strategic 'diversity' is a luxury that might be tolerated among actors distant from each other within a relatively benign security environment, but is dangerously self-indulgent in Europe at the best of times and becomes progressively more dangerous as tangible threats emerge. Unfortunately, the very nature of the new security environment militates against consensus on a transnational strategic concept. The challenge is undoubtedly tough for, as Lawrence Freedman states, 'Its most striking feature is its lack of a fixed form. The new circumstances and capabilities do not prescribe one strategy, but extend the range of strategies that might be followed.'[2]

A disconcerted Europe

Of course, there are some very important differences between the 1920s and 2002. The nature of the European nation-state itself is profoundly different, reflecting societies that have evolved beyond recognition; today, both internal political legitimacy and the external organization of state power are far more pluralistic. Indeed, a reasoned critique of this article would point out that the very structure of European security today reflects the changed nature of the European nation-state—hence the title, 'shade' of Locarno. However, John Mearsheimer makes a valid point when he writes: 'States still fear each other and seek to gain power at each other's expense, *even within the strategically safer confines of the EU* (author's emphasis), because international anarchy—the driving force behind Great Power behaviour—did not change with the end of the Cold War, and there are few signs that such change is likely soon.'[3]

However, there are sufficient similarities to reinforce the central thesis of this article: that European defence is failing because, in the absence of a transnational strategic concept shared and agreed upon by the European great powers, there are no guidelines for the application of European coercive power—be it within the EU or beyond. Moreover, the hideously complex relationship between states and institutions in Europe is further preventing the construction of effective security policy, be it at national or international level. Consequently, none of the major actors has any clear framework for the application of the still powerful security instruments each has at its disposal. This could be particularly grave for the EU's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) which, as a result of strategic schizophrenia, is in danger of being 'WEU-ized': that is, left to quietly rot in the corner of the EU institutional framework, never to be used.

The consequence of such schizophrenia is policy paralysis and the progressive renationalization and ad hoc application of security tools in the face of steadily mounting threats to European security. Indeed, the Balkan tragedy of

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[2] Lawrence Freedman, *The revolution in strategic affairs*, IISS Adelphi Paper 318 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 10.

[3] John J. Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of great power politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 361 (emphasis added).

the 1990s demonstrated not only the danger of such a situation but how such political complexity prevents even the most powerful states from taking decisive action even when they have it in their gift to do so. The recent debate over whether the EU should take on a limited peacekeeping operation in Macedonia contains echoes of the 1920s and serves only to confirm how overly complex relationships undermine strategic self-confidence. Indeed, the idea that peace-keepers can keep the peace only when the peace is already kept is reminiscent of the 1928 Franco-American Kellogg–Briand Pact, which committed the signa-tories to support each other in the pursuit of the peaceful resolution of conflicts, so long as a conflict did not break out. If a conflict did break out, there were no provisions for the use of force.[4] It was a security pact that would work only if it was not needed and therefore lacked any coercive credibility. Many harbour similar suspicions about the ESDP today.

Playing at greatness

A quick survey of the basic policy positions of the major players simply serves to highlight the difficulties Europeans face in building an effective transnational strategic concept, and the confusion prevalent throughout Europe over the relationship between values and interests. Of the 'great' EU powers, Britain appears to have, at least on the surface, the clearest strategic concept, with clear policy goals and a strong military capability in support of an effective diplomatic machine which employs international institutions as power enablers and multi-pliers for national security policy, not as ends in themselves. At yet there is a contradiction in British policy. The 'half-in, half-out' relationship with the EU prevents Britain from effectively playing either its traditional role as balancer or acting as a continental power. This greatly complicates British policy-making as it swings between a stated desire to be 'at the heart of Europe' and the 'special relationship' with the US which, for most of the last century, it saw as a means of buttressing its role as balancer. Because the British are so unclear about their role in Europe and, indeed, the role of Europe in the security domain, it is very hard for Britain's European partners to assess the British position. Sophisticates in London try to make virtue out of necessity by suggesting that such a stance keeps Britain's options open, whereas more often than not it denies Britain any options at all.

The ESDP has been a victim of the strategic uncertainty at the heart of British policy. The overtures and fanfares that marked the Anglo-French relaunch of European defence at the St Malo summit in December 1998 have given way to a growing belief that the ESDP is a strategic sideshow for the British who are

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[4] Kellogg's successor Henry Stimson stated: 'The Kellogg–Briand Pact provides for no sanctions of force … instead it rests upon the sanction of public opinion which can be made one of the most potent sanctions of the world … Those critics who scoff at it have not accurately appraised the evolution in world opinion since the Great War.' See Henry L. Stimson and M. Bundy, *On active service in peace and war* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1948), p. 259.

still, by and large, committed to their special relationship with the US and NATO. The suspicion is that the British are using European defence simply as the latest gambit by which to play the balancing role however ineffectively; that, having prevented the Mitterrand–Kohl Franco-German axis becoming too powerful during the 1980s and 1990s, the British are now intent on using their military leadership of Europe to offset German economic leadership and thus use defence as a brake upon the process of European integration. At the same time they use their close relationship with the United States to exert further leverage within Europe and the world beyond, while endeavouring to use their European credentials to bolster their influence in Washington. For Tony Blair this is a very delicate and occasionally uncomfortable balancing act that can end up, if not handled judiciously, upsetting both American and European partners at one and the same time; a dangerous position, given the marked gap between the responsibilities that contemporary British 'prestige' generates and the limited ability of the UK to be a 'force for good' in the world.

French policy resembles its 1920s self most closely. France is losing both the European and transatlantic games and seems unsure whether to place the emphasis on a more nationally based security solution, a European solution or, indeed, a transatlantic solution. It oscillates between attempts to get close to London, Berlin and even, on occasions, Washington, while at the same time continuing its traditional effort to place France at the centre of a European 'cobweb' of security relationships that with the passing of time and power looks ever more inappropriate. Indeed, France is too weak economically these days to challenge German (and even British) leadership of Europe's political economy, and too weak militarily to challenge Britain's military leadership of Europe. In such circumstances, like their forebears, contemporary French governments seem to place increasing emphasis on the image of power rather than its substance, endeavouring to hide from domestic public opinion the facts of French weakness. The result is a strangely schizophenic quality to French policy: on the one hand, it espouses European integration and the EU, as it has done for the past fifty years; but on the other, as France's ability to make Europe French becomes ever weaker, it is underpinned by an ever more virulent form of French nationalism. It is becoming increasingly apparent that France is no more European in spirit than Britain; the only real difference is that Britain is more honest about its position. Consequently, France seems to console itself with trying to accumulate as many key posts in the European process as possible, by way of compensation for its political weakness and to act as a brake upon it.

It is not without a certain irony that Germany's contemporary foreign and security policy most closely reflects that of Britain in the 1920s and 1930s; as such it is Europe's leading Nordic power to all intents and purposes neutral when it comes to dealing with armed threat. Unfortunately, Germany, now as then, is the key to the new European order, and until it gets its security act together Europe will continue to punch beneath its weight. German policy is founded upon two basic principles: first, all German engagement on the

international stage must be locked firmly within a multilateral framework; second, little or no German military power must be used. The reasons are historically self-evident: each of the three attempts Germany made between 1870 and 1945 to radically alter the European balance of power culminated in the destruction of Germany and the temporary removal of Europe from the world stage. Like Britain in the 1920s and 1930s, Germany espouses a philosophy of collective security that it seems very reluctant to support actively. That, by definition, goes a very long way to rendering the European security system flawed. Deployments of German forces in the Gulf, Somalia, the Balkans and, more recently, Afghanistan suggest that a process of strategic rehabilitation is under way—and this is to be welcomed, because Germany is a model democracy; but the pace of these developments is painfully slow. Further irony resides in the fact that the very nature of modern German democracy and the power it imbues upon the *Länder* at the regional level also gives the modern German state many of the qualities (if they can be called such) of the fractured German Confederation prior to unification under Bismarck's Prussia in 1866. As one British diplomat put it recently, 'since the collapse of the Soviet Union the Germans simply think the enemy has gone away.'[5] The state of its armed forces and defence expenditure reflects such a view. At the same time, there is a self-satisfied aspect to German power that reflects a view in Berlin according to which Germany has only to sit back and wait to assume its natural position as leader of Europe. Those who hold this view are probably correct; but they also seem obstinately myopic in respect of the security responsibilities that such leadership will confer, both in Europe and beyond.

Italy continues to be an enigma. Too often Italy is a big country that behaves like a small one; lacking sufficient strategic self-confidence to develop a strategic concept for itself, it tends to wait to be informed of its strategic direction by the *directoire* of Britain, France and Germany. Like the pre-Mussolini Italy of the 1920s, it still seems almost surprised to be at the top table, to which it too often comes with a very narrow view of the Italian interest and a very unambitious idea of what Italy can achieve, even though it dresses its positions up in the grandiloquence of 'high Europeanism'. Italy's main preoccupation, like that of Orlando at Versailles, seems to be to get the most for itself out of any system in which it participates. In the current context, that means gaining as much strategic influence as possible for the least amount of effort. Thus Italy talks a lot about Europe and its role in the world but actually does very little. The state of its armed forces and the level of resources it is prepared to commit to its own security and defence and that of others reflects this imbalance between talk and action. Italy has no clear view of what its armed forces are actually for, other than ensuring its presence among those powers that really decide the strategic direction of Europe. Consequently, it is questionable whether Italy's armed forces can do anything very much, even allowing for the successful Operation

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[5] 'Transformed: a survey of the defence industry', *The Economist*, 20 July 2002, p. 4.

Alba in Albania. Indeed, such is their poor state and lack of effective organization that it is doubtful that Italian forces can any longer be used for any sustained operation, be it pursuit of an Article 5 collective defence mission or a projected collective security mission. If Italy wants to be serious and be taken seriously, the minimum price it will have to pay is the reversal of this situation.

Russia and America: Europe's old, new and former European powers?

Russia today is less like the Soviet Union of Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev and more like the nineteenth-century Russia of Gorchakov, chancellor to Tsar Alexander I. It is a weak but large power that under Putin appears to swing between a desire to be part of the Western club and an inherent suspicion that it is all an anti-Russian plot. For ten years the West wondered which way (if at all) Russia would swing. However, the attacks on 11 September 2001 appear, on the surface at least, to have galvanized a realization in Moscow that the threat posed by radical Islam to its south and east is far greater than any residual threat it perceives in NATO. Indeed, NATO could well offer Russia the one stable border Moscow could rely on. However, old enmities go deep—far deeper than the fifty years of ideological struggle during the Cold War—and the tendency of Russians to take a very long and yet narrow view of history has yet to be dispelled. Putin, like the tsars before him, views Russia's relationship with the West in opportunistic terms, offering a chance to consolidate and reconstitute Russian power. As in the past, Moscow will seek membership of a European security system only so long as Russia is weak. The stronger it becomes, the more reason there is to believe that it will try to reassert a sphere of influence around its borders that it regards as Russian by right.

Thus Russia's historic relationship with the rest of Europe has not changed as much as the optimists would have it, and the dilemma posed by Russia remains: Europe can be truly secure only with Russia, but a European security system that incorporates Russia will be very difficult to make work. It was Chancellor Gorchakov who said that Russian expansionism always starts off defensively as a response to self-perceived insecurity and then outgrows itself through a self-sustaining momentum of expansionism.[6] Nothing has occurred in post-Cold War Russia to suggest that this basic truism of Russian security policy has changed. In spite of the recent rhetoric that has emerged from Moscow calling for constructive engagement, the nature of strategic thinking in Russia tends to be very

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[6] Chancellor Alexander Gorchakov summed up the perennial Russian security dilemma in a famous memo concerning Central Asia. 'The situation of Russia in Central Asia is similar to that of all civilised states that come into contact with half-savage nomadic tribes without a firm social organisation. In such cases, the interests of border security and trade relations always require that the more civilised state have a certain authority over its neighbours . . . The state must therefore make a choice: either to give up this continuous effort and doom its borders to constant unrest . . . or else to advance further and further into the heart of the savage lands . . . where the greatest difficulty lies in being able to stop.' For much of the twentieth century Russia seemed to regard capitalism and central and eastern Europe as 'half-savage nomadic tribes without a firm social order'. Gorchakov memorandum quoted from Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), p. 141.

old-fashioned. Maybe the process of engagement will itself lead to a value-based concept of Russian interests similar to that of the west European powers; but it would be foolish to bet on it. President Putin's conception of power politics still seems to be one that Metternich and Bismarck would have understood as being traditionally Russian: the buying of time to recover resources until Mother Russia can, once again, re-emerge to play the role of stand-alone power astride a line between Russia as part of European security and Russia as a threat to it.

It is fashionable in Europe to say that the United States is once again disengaging from European security. Superficially, US policy today cannot be compared to that of the 1920s, when, having imposed a new form of organizing power upon the Europeans, it then promptly withdrew into an isolationism that doomed its protégé to eventual failure. However, there are similarities. As in the 1920s, there is today an assumption that, because America and Europe share democratic institutions and values, not to mention relative wealth compared with the rest of the world, they share the same approach to governance and security. This is a dangerous oversimplification of transatlantic relations. Now as then, American society is very different from European society. It is structured differently, and it has different expectations of what is acceptable domestically and possible internationally. Now as then, America has tried to impose a very different world view upon Europe. In 2002 this complex relationship is made even more complicated by America's own confusion as to what constitutes its strategic concept. In February 1939 Senator Vandenberg warned against the dangers of America's involvement in the forthcoming conflict by saying that America could not be the world's policeman.[7] It took Roosevelt's careful prompting to convince a deeply isolationist American people that such a role was its manifest destiny. Now as then, America seems unwilling to face up to the full price of its victory. Consequently, it oscillates between narrow unilateralism, which views the utility of American power as a means to a very parochial American end, and broad unilateralism, which accepts a degree of influence brought to bear by friends and allies, and that multilateral institutions have some inherent value. Thus security policy tends to be overmilitarized and in the hands of an American political elite constantly in search of quick solutions that will permit them to disengage (compared with Europeans who regard policy as an endless multilevel engagement which over-civilianizes security).

This battle for the shape and form of the American strategic concept is nothing new. Therefore, Europeans should not be so surprised by the tone and nature of some of President Bush's more strident utterances, for they are entirely consistent with the thrust of traditional American engagement with the world. A century ago American policy emerged from an ideological tussle between two great presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, much as British foreign

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7 In a speech to the Senate on 27 February 1939 ('It is not cowardice to think of America first'), Vandenberg stated, 'We all have our sympathies and our natural emotions on behalf of the victims of national or international outrage all around the globe; but we are not, we cannot be, the world's protector or the world's policeman.'

policy had been shaped a generation earlier by the battle between Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone. Roosevelt, the hard-bitten realist whose vision of American power would have been immediately recognizable to Richelieu, Palmerston or Bismarck, spent much of his political career locked in battle with the idealist Wilson, who was to have such a profound impact upon the Treaty of Versailles and the Europe it created. America withdrew from its own creation because that domestic argument, which was carried on in Congress, was never resolved. Unsure of its role, America in the 1920s chose to have no role. In spite of the rhetoric, that strategic uncertainty is a singular facet of the American strategic debate today.

Then as now, the uncertainties over the boundaries of presidential authority and the prerogative of Congress proved too much for the creation of sustained and consistent American foreign policy. As a result, it was very hard then, as it is now, to read American policy, trapped as ever between an evangelical wing and a more narrow interpretation of the American interest that undermines effective engagement with the world over which the US holds such sway. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War the US chose not to make the same mistake as in 1919 (although it took a lot of prompting from British statesmen such as Winston Churchill and Ernest Bevin), eventually committing itself to the role of guarantor in the face of Soviet military might. Thankfully, strategic thinkers in the America of the day, such as George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau, had been greatly influenced by the work of British thinkers, such as E. H. Carr, and convinced a sceptical American political elite that the US had to assume the mantle of balancer from Britain. Consequently, America played that role to such effect that many Europeans came to regard the US as a European power. It was the exception, rather than the rule. Europeans would complain from time to time about the tenor or direction of American policy, but from Truman through to the first President Bush, America was the constant in the European security firmament.

There are no such thinkers in Washington today who enjoy the power to influence the policy process as Kennan or Morgenthau did. There are no George Marshalls, no Roosevelts, Trumans, Eisenhowers or Kennedys. Like Europe, America suffers from vertiginous mediocrity, and its strategic concept suffers accordingly. With the US itself unsure of its role and the extent to which its power confers responsibilities upon it, the instinct of the Washington elite is again to see America as a kind of 'gated community' that must emerge from its lair into a jealous world only as and when a direct threat to the US is perceived.[8] There *is* a debate between 'internationalists' and 'isolationists', just as there was during the era of President Calvin Coolidge and Secretary of State Kellogg during the 1920s;[9] however, now as then, there is a broad consensus that even if

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[8] See Tony Judt, 'Its own worst enemy', *New York Review of Books*, 15 Aug. 2002.
[9] To give a flavour of the times, President Calvin Coolidge in December 1928 before Congress: 'Observance of this covenant [Kellog—Briand Pact] promises more for the peace of the world than any other agreement ever negotiated among the nations.' Selig Adler, 'The isolationist impulse: its twentieth century reaction' (London: Macmillan, 1957), p. 214.

the US does engage it must be on US terms. Unilateralism is simply the terms of the 'contract' between an instinctively isolationist people and an elite who wish to engage with the world. This only goes to demonstrate how *un*-European a power America is. Seduced by the possibilities inherent in its own power, but unsure to what extent it should get involved, the US to an ever greater extent does not create classical foreign policy but exports domestic policy, making it an unreliable partner for all but the most pressing of threats.

The continuing Versailles legacy

Another similarity with 1920s Europe is the patchwork quality of the map of contemporary central and eastern Europe, reflecting the final and proper victory of the principle of self-determination that was a centrepiece of Versailles. Equally, now as then, the lines drawn across the central and eastern European map cannot be truly said to reflect self-determination as the scribes of Versailles had intended. Admittedly, the plethora of weak states that Versailles created cannot be too directly compared with those that exist in 2002. With the exception of the former Yugoslavia, the states that regained their freedom and identity following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 have far more intrinsic strength than their predecessors, not least because they are not trapped between a revisionist, power-obsessed Germany and a Soviet Union committed to the expansion of its own ideological and power creed under the alibi of communism. Nonetheless, many of these states continue to be weak actors and entities, whose multi-ethnic character continues to cause tensions as it did eighty years ago. At the very least the states that are queuing up to join NATO and the EU bring little in terms of added security value to those organizations, but many more responsibilities to both themselves and the states that created them. Disagreement over how such responsibilities should be managed simply reinforces the confusion over what transnational strategic concepts these organizations are meant to serve—security by means of incorporating insecurity, or security by means of the ability to project decisive cooptive and coercive power upon them. The current approach seems to represent a strange, hybrid fusion of the two—security by default, rather than by design.

Moreover, it is not without a certain tragic irony that the consequences of the Versailles peace in central and eastern Europe are still apparent to Europeans today. Indeed, the tragedy of the Balkans was a product not of the end of the Cold War—that was merely the catalyst—but rather of the Treaty of Versailles which created Yugoslavia in the first place. It is sad to reflect that Europe has never managed to come to terms with the collapse of both the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires and is still engaged in managing its aftermath.

Europe's league of gridlocking institutions

The competing and contradictory strategic concepts of both major and minor European and extra-European states are reflected in the institutions that they created and in which their security is founded. Unsure whether they are guardians of values, vehicles for the pursuit of interests or shields for Europe's protection, the OSCE, EU and NATO compete and contend. In the absence of a defining systemic threat, they are ambiguous and ambivalent in respect of the demarcation of their respective responsibilities, roles and purposes; the boundaries between regime, alliance and community become progressively blurred and their strategic concepts ever more confused.

The Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) most closely resembles the League of Nations, precisely because it follows the model of its successor, the United Nations, in being a regime, not an alliance. As such it is primarily a place for talking, which is no bad function. As Winston Churchill said, 'Jaw-jaw is better than war-war.'[10] However, its cumbersome collective security mechanisms are also redolent of the League, with the result that with over 50 members it is too cumbersome for effective engagement during the violent phase of crises, forcing the bigger European powers to pay lip-service to its utility in the pursuit of security in much the same way that the United States does to the UN itself.

The EU is endeavouring to construct a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that reflects the fundamental tenets of the UN Charter; but its members fail to invest in the very instrument that could give it true credibility—military power. Consequently, the gap between the ambition of the CFSP, as stated in the Treaty on European Union, which is ultimately to take on both the collective security and common defence functions of the member states, sits in almost contemptible contrast with what the armed forces of its member states are actually able to do—a few rescue and humanitarian tasks, some peacekeeping and maybe some relatively minor peacemaking tasks that fail to begin to match the threats that are emerging. This is because the EU is both community and alliance. The communitarian aspects of the Treaty on European Union sit in often bizarre contrast to the intergovernmental foreign and security policy, which is little more than a good old-fashioned alliance. It is as though the very confusion that undermines a European strategic concept has been institutionalized at the heart of the EU itself.

NATO is Europe's only truly fighting organization and, as such, Europe's only true alliance. However, recent efforts to make NATO more 'political' by increasing the numbers of both member nations and partners are making the organization less alliance and more community, with all the implications for its strategic concept thereafter entailed. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO has had profound difficulty defining its exact function in the European

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[10] Speech in Washington DC, 26 June 1954, *Oxford dictionary of quotations*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

security 'marketplace'; and, not surprisingly, it has found itself coming into conflict with its two partner organizations. Since the wars in the Balkans, and now Afghanistan, NATO has sought to break out of the traditional shackles of geographical competence as a platform for the projection of Euro-American military power worldwide, but has been constrained by profound disagreement among its members over the wisdom and feasibility of such a role. At the same time, through enlargement it has also sought to confer security through membership, not just aggregated military might, in much the same way that the EU employs economic power. Certainly, there is no endemic reason why 'widening' and 'deepening' should not work together. Indeed, if properly planned and managed, the two processes could be mutually reinforcing. However, it is precisely the absence of such planning that bedevils European security and defence, whether in NATO, the EU or the OSCE. Developments take place not as a consequence of an agreed transnational strategic concept but as the outcome of many contending concepts which render the security architecture profoundly unsteady. The danger is that under the slightest pressure the edifice may well collapse, with the likely consequence that Europe's security will once again become progressively renationalized, just as it was in the 1930s.

The emperor's new clothes: Europe's threat/capabilities gap

This, in fact, is precisely what has happened over recent years. Each significant crisis since 1991 has witnessed a retreat by the major powers from institutions as a locus for the planning and conduct of the political and military aspects of crisis management. In their place has emerged a renewed form of political and military ad hoc-ery driven by contact groups and *directoires*. It is more than a traditional reflex, reflecting precisely the failure to develop a coherent European strategic concept and reinforced by the inherent weaknesses of both the states and the institutions they created, and their inability to deliver the security 'good'. This was exactly the same dilemma faced by the League of Nations when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and, thereafter, through the persistent and repeated violations of its charter first by Mussolini over Abyssinia (1935) and then Hitler in the Rhineland (1936) and Austria (1938). Until Hitler's occupation of Prague in March 1939 the Western democracies placed the preservation of peace at all costs above the preservation of security and, in so doing, doomed the peace to fail. There was an 'emperor's new clothes' approach to security, shades of which can be seen in Europe today. The Europe of 2002 is a long way from the Europe of 1939, but the ghosts of that doomed peace are still with us and can be all too readily witnessed in the many gaps between the rhetoric of many of Europe's leaders on the one hand and the state of their armed forces and their ability to implement security solutions on the other.

Certainly, as new factors emerge that could potentially pose serious threats to Europe, too many states are pretending that it is 'business as usual', that nothing need be done until later. Exactly the same principle was applied by the British

governments of Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin in the late 1920s, when it was already apparent that the peace of Versailles was beginning to unravel and the need for an early and strong stance by the Western democracies was paramount. Indeed, it was not just Hitler who destroyed the twenty-year truce but the fantasy upon which British and French foreign and defence policies of the time were founded. The British Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) called it the 'Ten Year Rule':[11] if a threat was deemed unlikely to become reality over that period, then no contingency planning was considered necessary. In effect, the Britain of the 1920s was prepared to recognize only as much threat as it could afford or, indeed, as its seriously weakened armed forces could deal with. The result in the last century was that Britain was five years too late in beginning its preparations for war, France retreated into the strategic defensive folly of the Maginot Line and the United States continued its strategic vacation until that fateful Sunday in December 1941. The link with the Europe of today is all too apparent. The briefest of surveys of the emerging security environment underlines the extent of the problem, particularly if European efforts are compared and contrasted with US efforts. Put simply, west European states are failing to face up to their security responsibilities, with possibly disastrous consequences for European citizens in the years to come.

There is a basic truism about Western security and the transatlantic gap. First, the lower the threat and the fewer states are involved, the more confused and ineffective US policy becomes. Second, the greater the threat and the more state actors it involves, the less effective European policy becomes. For the US, strategic threat remains the cornerstone of its policy, even if, in the wake of 11 September 2001, it is thankfully the most remote. Nevertheless, strategic threat was still the prime driver of the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and remains at the top of the American strategic agenda, whereas it is questionable whether it is on the European strategic agenda at all. While there is no immediate strategic challenger to the pre-eminence of the US, China is regarded by the US military establishment (and the political right) as the state most likely to emerge as the 'balancing' power in the international system over the next ten to twenty years.[12] However, Europeans recognize no such scenario, partly because such a threat lies well beyond any European transnational strategic concept: in

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[11] The Encyclopaedia Britannica states: 'After Versailles the British Government had established the Ten Year Rule as a rationale for holding down unitary spending: each year it was determined that virtually no chance existed of war breaking out over the next decade'. These were 'the years the locust hath eaten', said Churchill. Encyclopaedia Britannica CD 99, Disc 1.

[12] While Steve Cambone, who was chief of staff on the Rumsfeld Commission, expressly denies that National Missile Defense is aimed at China, he does make the point that 'the intelligence community now projects that by 2015 China will add a "few tens" of newly-designed ICBMs to the roughly twenty ICBMs it now deploys. This modernization and expansion program, begun some time ago, would provide more capability than China has today. In relation to a limited US defense, after China completes this program the balance will be roughly where it is today. If China expands its modernization effort beyond current projections, they do so out of strategic ambition and not in response to a US deployment.' See S. Cambone, 'Threats and risks prompting a commitment to Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)', in B. Schmitt and J. Lindley-French, eds, *National missile defence and the future of nuclear policy*, occasional paper 18 (Paris: WEU–ISS, 2000), p. 15.

other words, Europeans would rather not know. Europeans like to congratulate themselves that the EU represents a new way of organizing power in the international system that rejects the balance of power as the only ordering principle for power relations.[13] In fact, both Americans and Europeans reject balance of power politics, even if they frequently engage in it, further reinforcing the confusion inherent in their respective strategic concepts. However, whereas many Europeans would prefer to pursue security through a form of redistribution of power, the US seeks to dominate the international system to such an extent that no strategic challenge will ever again be posed.[14] Thus, an assumption of conflict inevitability is implicit in US thinking, while Europeans far too often opt for a form of conflict myopia.

As the renewed concerns about Saddam Hussein attest, regional state actors potentially armed with weapons of mass destruction provide the second level of threat for the US. These include increasingly advanced 'states of concern' armed with weapons of mass destruction and access to dual-use technologies that can be bought off the shelf (COTS).[15] Iraq is the most obvious case; hence the continual efforts to link Saddam's regime to al-Qa'ida. However, Europeans and Americans differ fundamentally about the extent of such threat and the methods by which to deal with it. President Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address referred to Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an 'axis of evil'[16] that America was committed to confronting and destroying. Europeans, by and large, accept the potentiality for threat posed by two of the three regimes, but they do not agree that military action would necessarily bring about solutions and are profoundly concerned that US proposals to attack Iraq could destabilize the entire region and lead to the collapse of the 'coalition against terror'.

Clearly, the difference in power and concepts of engagement between America and Europe is shaping a profound dichotomy in European and American threat perceptions at this level. Unfortunately, both American and European responses reflect inadequate policy for dealing with complex security challenges. While both strategic and regional threats posed by second-tier states provide some scenarios to which the full spectrum warfighting/dominance doctrine of the US military can be applied, the complexity of modern threats is not amenable to such solutions, enabling the Europeans to avoid hard questions about the need to invest more effectively in military capability.[17] Consequently, the West's

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[13] Historically, Americans have done just the same. Speaking at the Yalta Conference in 1945, President Roosevelt called for 'the end … of unilateral action, the spheres of influence, the balance of power, and all the other expedients that have been tried for centuries—and have always failed'. Quoted in Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American foreign policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 520.

[14] A high-ranking US official confirmed this to the author in 2001.

[15] COTS: commercial off-the-shelf.

[16] 'President delivers State of the Union address'. www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion.

[17] Joint Vision 2020, the Pentagon's main conceptual planning statement, defines full spectrum dominance as 'the independent application of dominant manoeuvre, precision engagement, focused logistics, and full dimensional protection. Attaining that goal requires the steady infusion of new technology and modernization and replacement of equipment. However, material superiority alone is not sufficient. Of greater importance is the development of doctrine, organizations, training and education, leaders, and people

security policy tends to be relatively effective at the high-intensity and low-intensity ends of threat, but pretty inept at dealing with anything in between.

Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'ida represent the quintessential third-level threat, with the potential to 'import' elements from both strategic and mid-strategic threat levels. Sub-strategic, asymmetric warfare[18] includes catastrophic terrorism, both state-sponsored and non-state-sponsored, with potentially global reach, particularly when allied to internationally organized crime. As such it represents the most immediate challenge to both Europeans and Americans; and yet, because of its amorphous nature and the difficulty of tackling it, such threat again highlights a profound divergence in European and American approaches. This could explain why the impression given by much of the debate since 11 September is that this assault was a 'bolt from the blue'. In fact, the likelihood of such attacks has been a constant for the past ten years within the transatlantic strategic community. Certainly, the lack of preparation and restructuring of security services to deal with such a threat has underlined the extent to which both Americans and Europeans have been 'out to lunch' strategically during the last decade. Such threats are also the most resistant to American approaches, requiring a long-term, multifaceted civil–military engagement rather than a narrow, militarily focused engagement—an approach to which Europeans have shown themselves more sensitive, even if they lack sufficient tools to implement it effectively. Both Europeans and Americans find it difficult to manage the comprehensive mix of civilian, military, police and intelligence capabilities that consistent engagement requires.[19]

Cyber-warfare presents a more exotic level of threat and one of which Americans are acutely more conscious than Europeans. American society is the world's only true cyber-society and is increasingly concerned about the vulnerability that such reliance engenders. Indeed, US elaboration of cyber-warfare, as both an offensive and a defensive doctrine, is far in advance of anything similar in Europe, underlining the divergence in how Europeans and Americans see threat and, indeed, themselves. Consequently, Americans are increasingly concerned about homeland security. They fear that their ability to act abroad could be seriously compromised by attacks on critical national infrastructure (CNI) by cyber-terrorists who could disrupt domestic life to such an extent that the US would be paralysed, both politically and militarily. This reflects the extent to which technology both defines America's strength and underlines its vulnerability. Indeed, technology sets the US apart from the rest of the world because it

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that effectively take advantage of the technology': Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2020* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2000), p. 4.

[18] Interestingly, Joint Vision 2020 states: 'The potential of … asymmetric approaches is perhaps the most serious danger America faces in the immediate future—and this danger includes long-range ballistic missiles and other direct threats to US citizens and territory. The asymmetric methods and objectives of an adversary are often far more important than the relative technological imbalance, and the psychological impact of an attack might far outweigh the actual physical damage inflicted': ibid., p. 6.

[19] This distinction is important because the US regards the Petersberg tasks as small-scale contingencies, although the way the tasks have evolved over the past ten years does not automatically ensure that any operation under them would necessarily be small-scale.

allows American policy-makers to think of possibilities that Europeans and the rest of the world cannot begin to grasp. Consequently, not only are Europeans 'out of the loop' in these areas, their responses tend to be national rather than international. Thus it is very hard for the US to lead in these areas, not least because there is so little European engagement at this level of threat.

Limited wars of intervention and peace support operations (PSOs) are a response to threat which also divides Americans and Europeans. As the struggle in Afghanistan has amply demonstrated, limited wars of intervention and robust PSOs are increasingly the currency of modern international security as the inviolability of Westphalian state sovereignty gives way to conditional sover-eignty linked to the nature of governance within a state. Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s marked a point of divergence between the US and its European allies that was reinforced by the crisis in Macedonia. Wars of intervention and PSOs have also confronted Europeans with a stark choice. They can either accept the US security model and prepare for hypothetical high-intensity conflicts or con-centrate their relatively meagre resources on what Americans rather pejoratively call 'small-scale contingencies' that are here and now.[20] They cannot do both. It is the Sierra Leones and Afghanistans of this world, which require complex and prolonged engagement, often involving a fusion of on the ground peacekeep-ing, peacemaking *and* warfighting, that the US finds so challenging because they imply a very different use of military power from that for which the US armed forces are prepared. Thus a divide is opening up within the Atlantic alliance in the area of military doctrine (the way militaries do things) that is likely to become progressively more acute as operations such as that by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan become increasingly long-distance, dangerous and delicate and the US increasingly recalcitrant. Certainly, while wars of intervention and PSOs sit at the top of the European threat response spectrum, they are well down that of the United States. Moreover, the old 'in area'/'out of area' divide has become meaningless, placing ever more pressure on Europeans to lead where Americans choose not to. The need for a European strategic concept is pressing.

A new concert of Europe?

What, then, is to be done? Unfashionable though it is, European security is founded upon a balance of power and the search for strategic consensus among a decisive but often shifting constellation of actors enjoying varying levels of power. In an age when both the source of erstwhile security for Europe, namely the US, and the potential source of threat are both unsure, one thing is clear:

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[20] Martin van Crefeld describes war thus: 'a necessary evil, war was at the same time a temporary departure from "cosmic harmony", or Tao. By definition, Tao can only be restored by Tao. Hence the war will be won by the side possessing the greatest Virtue, Virtue itself being but another translation of Tao.' It is clear that Sun Tzu would not have approved of Wilson's virtue without sanction. See M. van Crefeld, *The art of war: war and military thought* (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 24.

the great powers of western Europe will once again have to lead the wider Europe towards a new security system. Whether within the framework of institutions or of state-to-state relations, balancing power is as much a function of the day-to-day life of the European Union as it was for the Grand Alliance or the Concert of Europe. It is the ineluctable reality for states bound so closely together that none can be permitted the 'freedom' either to dominate or to withdraw. That seminal need to balance power has tended to reinforce a conservative approach to security. Indeed, in the past its architects have been conservative by both instinct and policy—William III, Richelieu, Metternich, Gorchakov, Bismarck, Stresemann, Churchill and de Gaulle. Indeed, *all* the great statesmen have come from weaker powers in search of renewed balance (what Sun Tzu called the 'Tao'[15]), none from stronger powers seemingly endowed with an ability to effect real change in the system. France's Cardinal Richelieu justified *raison d'état* by the need to balance the Holy Roman Empire of Ferdinand II, and the emperor's penchant for sacred universalism, with the famous assertion that if man was immortal, states were not. Richelieu coopted values to the service of interests, and not the reverse. William III of England constructed the Grand Alliance to balance the power of Louis XIV in the early years of the seventeenth century. Bismarck unified Germany under conservative Prussian leadership when a look at the map of Europe from 1848 to 1866 would have suggested that the German Confederation would be unified within a more liberal, democratic political framework. Yet the balances constructed by such statesmen have rarely persisted, tending to collapse shortly after their architects have left the international stage—partly because their complexities reflected the particular genius of their creators and were beyond the ken of lesser men.

There have been radical statesmen—Louis XIV, Napoleon, Wilhelm II and Hitler come immediately to mind; but they were unable to find the balance between ambition and restraint that is the hallmark that qualifies the statesman for the epithet 'great' within the European context. Bismarck fell in 1890 because he could no longer balance the system he had created under the insistent pressure of the young Kaiser Wilhelm II. Europe has also had more than its fair share of poor statesmen in charge of weak states whose weakness has been compounded by a tendency to overestimate their power. Napoleon III and Neville Chamberlain both suffered from such failings, with catastrophic results for both their countries and Europe. A look across Europe today would suggest that in certain quarters this is a persistent failing: for some, the appearance of power is more important than the fact, bringing with it the danger of strategic overstretch. Certainly, while Europeans have rarely been very good at the creative use of power—indeed, traditionally Europe has been incompetent with power—they have demonstrated consistent effectiveness at weakening the power of others. That is pretty much Europe's dilemma today; for while it has more potential power at its disposal than it has had for a very long time and is possessed of a sufficiently stable political platform from which to project it, European leaders lack either the ingenuity or the clarity to know how to use it

to long-term advantage and/or effect—partly because such power can be effective in the wider world only through the kind of power aggregation that is implicit in the structure of the EU but which its leading member states deny it. For all the high-profile efforts in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks, there are no great statesmen with a consistent vision for the application of aggregated European power in a complex security environment. As usual, a fractured Europe must manage complexity with mediocrity. It is not the first time (and will not be the last) that Europe has been faced with such a challenge.

But Europe also has a long history of making virtue out of mediocrity. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the 1815 Congress of Vienna, a peace was constructed that, for all its many tensions, held for a remarkably long time. The Concert of Europe represented a security system based upon a successful restraint of competing state interests within a conservative value framework. Although designed to contain post-Napoleonic France, and in spite of almost continuous French attempts to undermine it (even though France soon became a member), the structure endured because the victorious powers, Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia, developed a similar concept of security based upon a mix of power and shared values. Thus the great powers demonstrated that they were imbued with sufficient power and will to defend the status quo if necessary. It was the product of a peculiarly British genius for creating frameworks for limiting the effects of power (rather than structures designed to make the most of it). Founded under the auspices of the British Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh, the congress system was guaranteed by Britain playing its traditional role as chief arbiter and balancer among competing continental state interests. However, even when Britain became progressively concerned with extra-European matters, following the replacement of Castlereagh in 1822 by the less empathetic George Canning, who espoused a much narrower view of the British national interest (rather like the United States today), the system still held. In the following years it was Metternich of Austria who was called upon effectively to manage the mechanism through sheer diplomatic ingenuity under-pinned by the convergence of state values that modified state interests. That it worked for as long as it did was a testament to the convergence of state interests and values among the majority of its members in the aftermath of the Napoleonic era. It could endure only because Metternich was tacitly supported by the Russia of Alexander I, in spite of the tsar's tendency to shift wildly between the liberal and conservative causes, and even though Russia was a strategic competitor of Austria's within Europe, and of Britain's beyond. Consequently, the congress system enjoyed the three key components for a successful transnational strategic concept: flexibility, legitimacy and capability.

These inherent strengths were further reinforced by the clear hierarchy that existed between the regime, i.e. the congress mechanism itself, and the states that created it. The 'institution', such as it was, was subordinated to the states that brought it into being. It was a mechanism—nothing more, nothing less. That cannot be said of the Europe of 2002. In both post-Versailles and post-

Cold War Europe the relationship between interests and values and the hierarchy between the state and institution became increasingly blurred. This was particularly so for Britain and France in the 1920s, when they were left by the United States to make the League of Nations—a US creation—work. With its idealistic notions of collective security, self-determination and 'united fronts', the institution implicitly arrogated to itself a higher moral standing than the states that had created it. Thus it inverted the traditional relationship between the state and institution in pretty much the same way as the more evangelical supporters of the EU propose today. In other words, because the institution is born of a higher moral ambition than the old-fashioned nation–state, power *should* inexorably move from the state to the institution. Of course, it does not. In an ideal world there would be nothing wrong with such a position if the transfer of power were rapid, inexorable and complete. However, in the interim there is a point at which such institutions weaken the power of the state without providing for the effective use of the aggregated power that has been transferred to them. In effect, they create a sovereignty deficit from which the League suffered then, and the European Union suffers now. In the EU this is further complicated by a profound disagreement among the member states over both the extent and the utility of the power that is to be transferred. This not only prevents the development of a working European strategic concept but threatens the future development of the Union itself.

The EU: league or concert?

Furthermore, in the 1920s state power and the balancing thereof became synonymous with conflict rather than a mechanism for preventing the very imbalances that had so often led to war. This perception was reinforced by a series of complacent assumptions about the superiority of democratic institutions that could prove as dangerous now as they were then; assumptions founded upon a profound belief in the superiority of the foreign policies of democracies, the identification of individual morality with international morality, the rule of international law founded upon international arbitration and the need to replace the balance of power with a transnational consensus that would be fashioned by the good will of those involved backed up by the power of world opinion. Wilsonian idealism and the mechanism that it created invested an almost metaphysical faith in the institution as a reflection of the goodness of humanity. International relations became imbued with a moral essence based upon the profound belief that if only people had understood each other better they would not have slipped into the abyss of the First World War. Inherent, conflictual state interests were simply declared not to exist or would, in the words of President Harding, be punished by the 'odiousness of perfidy or infamy'.

In effect, therefore, the League of Nations represented a radical new transnational strategic concept based upon an attempt to use a moment of dominant power creatively. Like all previous attempts, it failed not because of weaknesses

in the concept per se but because it assumed permanence and dominance. Certainly, such a concept could have been made to work had all those who signed up to it shared the same values and viewed aggression and how to counter it in similar ways. In that case, rather like the congress system before it, they would have been in a position to punish any member of the system that defected, because values and interests would have been viewed as one and the same thing; but that was patently not the case. Then as now, there were very different interpretations of what was just, what constituted aggression, and what action should be taken and when, whether in the form of political, economic or military sanctions. Then as now, this undermined the effectiveness of the concept. Ironically, it was the great balancer itself, Britain, that abandoned its traditional role and wholeheartedly embraced the collective security system, and whose foreign policy, as a consequence, became so hopelessly confused in the period 1920–39. Sadly, by so doing it contributed to the collapse of the very system it championed. In short, the attempt to maintain a value-based system in which no one else either believed or was engaged was doomed to fail unless the leading power was a hegemon capable of imposing an organizing principle, which the Britain of the day clearly was not. In fact, British policy became progressively self-defeating, because by also championing disarmament as an essential component of collective security Britain ensured not only that the relative geopolitical power of the revisionists was enhanced but that the League would be denied any mechanism for effective sanctions should the members have decided to create one. The only power that might have played that role, the US, disengaged from the League concept almost from the moment it had imposed its vision of a European 'peace' upon Europe.

The other powers either did not believe in the League (France, Italy and Japan) or saw it as a function of an unjust Versailles peace that had been imposed upon them and therefore lacked political legitimacy (Germany). The France of both Clemenceau and Briand went along with it only in the hope that it might induce Britain to conclude a permanent alliance with France. As early as the 1920s, long before Hitler came to power, the Weimar Republic under Gustav Stresemann was endeavouring to 'revise' the terms of the Treaty of Versailles while at the same time recognizing that the commitment to general and comprehensive disarmament would progressively tip the strategic balance in favour of Germany. The newly formed Soviet Union looked at it askance, believing the treaty to reflect a profound misreading of the correlation of forces on the part of Britain and France—a cynical view based on a shared grievance with Germany over the Versailles territorial settlement that led the two countries to agree an accord as early as 1922 at the Rapallo conference. Italy under its prime minister Vittorio Orlando aimed only to get out of the process what it could, lacking any strategic concept of its own. In the Europe of 2002, there are shades not only of Locarno, but also of Versailles.

In effect, the European democracies today face similar dilemmas to the united front of the pre-Second World War period, even if on the face of it the

security environment is not as dangerous. Henry Kissinger captures the dilemma of the democracies before both the First and Second World Wars:

In 1939, military and political planning again lost touch, this time for the exactly opposite reason. The Western powers had an eminently sensible and moral political objective—to stop Hitler. But they were never able to develop a military strategy to attain that goal. In 1914, the military of every country were spoiling for war; in 1939 they had so many misgivings (even in Germany) that they abdicated their judgement to the political leaders. In 1914, there had been a strategy but no policy; in 1939 there was a policy but no strategy.[21]

In 2002, it would appear, there is neither strategy nor policy. Or, put another way, there are too many strategies and policies based upon contending strategic concepts. This has led to a dangerous paradox in European security policies that has become increasingly apparent over the past ten years. In the absence of a functioning transnational security concept west European powers, both big and small, react too late, with too little, to crises that seem increasingly beyond the scope and range of either their diplomatic or military capabilities, built as they are upon false strategic assumptions. The increase in the operational tempo of their armed forces should by now have demonstrated to west European leaders that, like it or not, they are back on the world stage and they need both the mechanisms and capabilities that their place in the world's 'Premiership' demands of them. As during the 1920s and 1930s, the gap between rhetoric and capacity, between the real world and the EU world, is becoming so apparent that the diplomatic credibility of all European states and institutions is suffering.

The manner in which the EU has developed its role in the security and defence of Europe has much to answer for in this sorry state of affairs. The creation of the CFSP and the ESDP introduced a new component into the European security system. Unfortunately, the CFSP is not just a tool for the security and defence of EU citizens, but an integral part of the process towards political union which has been its main mission since the Maastricht Treaty in 1991. As such, its primary purpose has been to bolster an endogenous process of state-building rather than to defend the European citizen. The consequence of this has been in turn to detach the actor from the strategic environment in which it resides, with the result that strategy and policy come to be driven by internal political factors rather than external realities. The focus of the EU upon the so-called Petersberg tasks is a case in point. Humanitarian and rescue missions, peacekeeping and the role of combat troops in peacemaking are all well and good, but within the EU context there is a danger that they will become ends in themselves, that is, simply a means to prove that the EU can organize military power, however irrelevant that power might be in the wider world. Moreover, if the scenarios implicit in those tasks become the basis for defence planning

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[21] Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 348.

then the same false assumptions that drove British planners in the 1920s will be superimposed upon the Europe of today, resulting in the wrong forces for the wrong missions at the wrong time. Building effective military capability takes many years, and with the new threat environment steadily becoming more dangerous, decisions have to be taken now that will affect what Europe can and cannot do in pursuit of its own security for years to come.

In the shade of Locarno?

Thus Europe is faced with a similar strategic choice to that faced by its democratic forebears of the 1920s and 1930s. It can continue to pretend the world is far more benign than it actually is; or it can recognize the dangers inherent in a world in which smaller and smaller groups gain access to greater and greater destructive power, and begin to take the appropriate security measures. Like it or not, the status and responsibilities conferred upon Europe by its being on the winning side of the Cold War and, moreover, having finally settled the 1871–89 European systemic schism will leave it with little choice. Now as then, the question remains: will Europe wake up in time? Make no mistake, for the past twelve years Europe has been engaged in a process of disarmament, under the rubric of the peace dividend that was a security end in itself, much as the 1920s saw general and comprehensive disarmament as an end in itself. Now much of Europe seems locked in the pretence of self-appeasement, preferring simply that threats would go away. Given that no single European state can aggregate sufficient military power to bring about positive change in the international system, multilateral frameworks will continue to play their essential role as policy and force multipliers; but they will be nothing more. Change will not be wrought from clever treaty language or sophisticated institutional structures. If that were the case, then in the interwar years Geneva's Palais des Nations alone would have sufficed to preserve the peace.

Whatever happens will be driven by the great powers. The strategic political correctness over the sensibilities of the smaller powers which has been instrumental in blocking the development of the CFSP/ESDP must be ended with an assertion by the great powers of strategic reality. Therefore, it is vital that the three west European great powers, Britain, France and Germany (four, if Italy decides it wants to be a major actor), begin a serious effort to develop a transnational strategic concept as the basis for a threat–driven rational response to the new security environment. What is needed is a new concert of Europe, because not since 1815 have so many great powers shared so many basic common values and interests. In effect, political and economic interdependence and the spread of liberal democratic values across the continent have produced the basis for a new concert. However, unlike the first concert, such a grouping will be focused not only upon the restraint of power within Europe, but upon the projection of power beyond it. For that reason it is vital that Russia and the US play a constructive part in supporting this new European great power *tri-rectoire*.

The smaller powers will not like it, and they will no doubt protest vociferously, but their influence wanes as threats increase, and they will have to accept that a reconstituted European security architecture will emerge first from the great powers, not from all fifteen or twenty-eight or however many members the EU amasses. As for the neutrals: how can one be neutral in a war against the kind of threats that are now appearing?

The institutions will have to be put back in their proper place—as tools for the promotion of security and not ends in themselves. The OSCE has a useful role to play in the non-violent aspects of crisis management. NATO will be vital as a military organization because it is the essential interoperability link with the US, under whose leadership Europeans will continue to engage the world over. However, the key is the EU. The great powers of the EU must make up their collective mind about the ESDP. It could become the natural organizing locus for west European military power within this new architecture. However, that will require that all EU member states recognize three fundamentals: they will all have to give up more of what has traditionally belonged to state prerogative if security is to be effective; accept the leadership of the *tri-rectoire*; and invest in the armed forces that can give the EU sufficient clout and credibility worldwide to ensure that the times when Europe has to resort to armed force are limited. If they do not, Brussels will become a latter-day Locarno, neither alliance nor community, neither collective security nor collective defence mechanism.

In other words, the ESDP must be either built or killed; because, as currently constituted, it is starting seriously to hamper balanced and effective planning by Europe's serious security actors. The EU must either become Europe's defence or get out of the way.

The strategic vacation that western Europe has enjoyed is over. It is time for us to get serious about security and defence again. In the absence of a great statesman or two—and Europe does not seem overly endowed in this regard— it is time to return the security debate to its fundamentals and embark upon the steady and methodical construction of a new security architecture, founded on a serious analysis of the threats that are emerging. Britain, France and Germany must lead the way because only they can construct a European strategic concept that identifies why, when and how Europe must act in pursuit of its vital, essential and general interests. The First Congress of Vienna created an architecture that came closest to the successful merging of values and interests that is the essence of a successful transnational strategic concept. It is time for a second congress—but not in Locarno.